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June 5, 2007 - Going green at Place des Arts

Montréal, June 5, 2007 – This summer, Francis Montillaud, winner of the sixth annual *Œuvre d'art éphémère*, a competition organized by Place des Arts, invites the public to "go green" with his piece *Se mettre au vert*. Installed around the Place des Arts Esplanade pool, this refreshing concept stems from the artist's desire to superimpose the serenity of nature on downtown Montréal, and in so doing to create a peaceful oasis in the midst of an area in constant motion.

Each year, a committee selects an artist to install his or her works in or around the Esplanade pool for the entire summer. Marie Lavigne, Executive Director of Place des Arts and initiator of *Œuvre d'art éphémère*, points out that the competition's mission is to "offer a visual artist high visibility in one of the busiest spots in the city. Each year, some three million passersby cross the Esplanade. Most of this traffic is during the summer festival season, when the Esplanade plays host to many major events. With the *Œuvre d'art éphémère*, Place des Arts offers the public a chance to see art in an urban environment."

For Mr. Montillaud, *Se mettre au vert* is an environmentally themed installation whose palette—as green as the name implies—stands in stark contrast to the surrounding concrete. "*Se mettre au vert* pays homage to nature, leisure and relaxation," he says. "It is intended to give passersby who frequent this public space a momentary break from the frenetic pace and an opportunity for reflection." To do so, the artist has created an arrangement of brightly coloured layers that work with the ornamental pool in much the same way as a theatre set. The superimposed layers form a spectacular landscape with a giant flower as the finishing touch. Human silhouettes, including a golfer, complete the ensemble.

The installation draws on the tradition known as *trompe l'oeil* (literally, "fool the eye"). From afar, the spectator sees a harmonious landscape; but on approaching, receives the impression that the objects have moved. The perspective thus varies based on a viewer's position in relation to the work.

The installation's various elements are made from steel and wood, materials that reference the urban landscape and signal the increasingly complex relations between urbanization and environmental concerns. In this piece, nature's fragility is emphasized by its reproduction in an urban setting—a context increasingly hostile to the natural world.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

For the past few years, Francis Montillaud's practice has leaned toward video installation. His work has shown in Québec and internationally. In March 2006, he presented *Helioplage* at the Abattoirs de Toulouse. He also participated in the Manifestation internationale d'art de Québec in 2005 and the 6th Biennale de Champ Libre in 2004. Mr. Montillaud is also active in the theatre. He created the video for Kevin McCoy's play *Ailleurs*. A graduate of the Université Laval fine arts program, he lives in Montréal and works in Québec City and Montréal.

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Source:

Marie-Josée Poisson

Communications Advisor and Editor, *Magazine de la Place des Arts*

(514) 285-4390 mjpoisson@pda.qc.ca

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